

5 Things to Do When Your Kid Isn't Making the Grade

When I entered my junior year of high school, I had a lot of optimism. Almost immediately, all of that was erased. I played soccer, which motivated me to succeed in other areas of my life.

During a game early in the season, I started to experience foot pain. As it turned out, I freakishly broke my foot straight across requiring two months in a cast and one month on crutches. Each day was physically taxing but more so emotionally. I lost my daily routine and motivation to achieve. I would even say I fell into a depression. My grades went down and I increasingly fell behind in my schoolwork.

My parents and teachers were concerned. There were a number of conversations with teachers in the hallway about my performance. All of this was intensified by the fact that junior year is such an important year for college admissions. I felt alone and desperate. I even cheated on an exam, something I harshly judged others about before. Failure was in and all around me. It was like a deep hole and I was disappearing into it.

If you have a child who is failing, I know at least a little of how they feel. Are report card days filled with anxiety and arguing? Are you consistently concerned about the direction they are headed? Are you at the end of your rope? Here five things to do when your kid isn't making the grade.

1. Concentrate on the basics. Both success and failure are contagious. When you're in the failure pit, it feels as if getting out is insurmountable. It is easy to want to quit. Their confidence is most likely shot. It's their mindset that needs the most help. Remind them of past successes. When

basketball teams are down by twenty points, good coaches will tell the team to cut the other team's lead down to ten points. That's how comebacks begin. Start by trying to create smaller and easier goals to achieve. Build small successes into momentum.

2. Research and analyze. Let your kids know that you are coming alongside them to help. Ask your son or daughter a lot of questions. They will probably resist because the last thing they want to talk about is their failing. Who does? But it is necessary in order to figure out the fullest picture possible. Talk to their teachers, guidance counselors, specialists, and research learning styles. You may even discover that they need to be tested for a certain learning disability.

3. Create a structured schedule. It can be overwhelming to know where to start, particularly for kids. A structure will give them much needed stability. It will help maximize their time and keep them consistently active toward accomplishing goals. Plan out study, homework, and break/free times. Tailor the schedule and activities to your discoveries in the research and analysis period.

4. Rewards and consequences. This can be done a number of ways. The easiest way to do it is to pay them bonuses similar to sales goals. The higher the grade, the higher the paycheck. You could also have them pay you when they get a low grade. Another way to do it is pay them for the faithfulness in their activity. There is a lot of debate about reward systems in education. It teaches our kids how the world works in terms of being paid for production while also motivating them. Opponents say that it kills creativity and a genuine love of learning. Perhaps they are correct; however, continuing to fail will not endear your kids to learning either. I would use it as a temporary way to get them moving in the right direction. Maybe just use it for the subjects they have a hard time with. Schedule activities that promote creativity so that is not missed.

5. Tutors and/or homeschooling. They may need some focused attention. If your lives allow it, you may consider homeschooling. You can start the day by doing subjects where they excel and experience the most enjoyment. You'll get an idea of their passions so you can teach to those interests and spark their love of learning. If that is not an option (or a desire), hire tutors. Every time I met with tutors, I did significantly better. You may have tried all of these things; but, for the sake of your child, don't give up. Go back to drawing board and keep trying new things. All of the investment will be worth it.

What other things can be done to help a child struggling in school?

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